

The Albany HERALD

By J.D. Sumner
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ALBANY - Albany's Congressional representative said Thursday that he will continue to push for funding for a new senior center, calling the construction of a new center an important goal for the quality of life of area senior citizens.

Congressman Sanford Bishop, D-Albany, said the James H. Gray Senior Citizens Center and a new planned center on the site of the old Byne Church have received more than \$700,000 in federal appropriations since 2004.

"The senior center in Albany is a vital part of life for many of the residents of Albany and Dougherty County, and I'd like the public to know that it is a priority for me as the representative of the district," Bishop said.

Bishop's comments came on the heels of a report to the Albany City Commission Tuesday by the city's federal lobbyist, who said that funding for the senior center - one of the agenda items for the city - had yet to be appropriated and fully funded.

Bishop pointed to appropriations that have been approved for the last five years, barring one year where earmarks were largely cut from an appropriations bill.

In 2004, the city received \$57,000 for renovations to the existing center's kitchen. In 2005, the city received \$72,000 to plan and design the new center. In 2006, \$175,000 was appropriated to begin construction, and in 2008 and 2009 the city received around \$390,000 total to go toward the construction of the center, he said.

More than \$100,000 was planned to go to the center in a 2007 bill but was cut when many earmarks went unfunded that year.

The new center is expected to cost around \$15 million to build and has been a priority of Albany Mayor Willie Adams, who expressed his disappointment in the fact that it was largely left out of appropriations this year.